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The Freeman-Jackson Cover-Up: How Arizona Punished a Mother for Escaping Abuse

What's playing out in Maricopa County, Arizona, is far from a typical custody case. At the center is Shawn Freeman, a SWAT operator with a documented history of violence, dishonesty, and abuse of power. Using his badge, connections, and a web of lies, Freeman orchestrated a campaign to discredit and punish Erin Gerlach, the mother of his daughter and a survivor of domestic violence. What should have been a fight to protect a child turned into a scandal exposing profound police misconduct, judicial bias, and systemic failure that weaponizes the family court system against victims.

Judge Charlene D. Jackson of the Maricopa County Superior Court presided over Freeman and Gerlach's custody case. Far from neutral, Jackson didn't merely enable Freeman's conduct. She institutionalized it by embedding retaliation into the machinery of family court itself. She transformed Freeman's lies into orders that carried the full force of law, stripped a protective mother of her rights, and endangered a child while violating both of their constitutional rights.

Erin Gerlach, now faces felony charges for custodial interference after protecting her daughter, Brooklyn, from the man she says abused them both. Her story, backed by sworn testimony, public records, and a growing coalition of advocates, reveals a system where abusers are rewarded, protective parents are criminalized, and judges operate with impunity.

The Freeman File: Arizona Certified a Liability with a Badge

Shawn Freeman's misconduct didn't begin in family court. His history reads like a liability report that should have ended his law enforcement career before it began.

Even before his custody battle with Erin Gerlach, Freeman had accumulated **domestic violence allegations from prior partners.** The pattern was consistent: aggression, control, and violence. One ex even filed a complaint with his agency. Instead of investigating, the department told Freeman to stop contacting her and promised to "handle it." He ignored those instructions and continued the relationship well into his time with Gerlach, even while she was pregnant with Brooklyn.

Freeman's troubles extended far beyond his personal life. **Civil lawsuits filed against him in his official capacity accuse him of excessive force, unnecessary escalation, reckless disregard for human life, and repeated civil rights violations that resulted in serious injury or death.** He allegedly misused his training, endangered civilians, failed to follow procedure, lied in reports, and operated with impunity. And yet, Arizona continues to certify him as a peace officer.

His early career was full of red flags. Freeman **failed his initial psychological evaluation** but, like other troubled officers employed by his agency, was inexplicably allowed a retake he should never have been granted. During his initial application, he also **admitted to taking controlled medication prescribed to someone else**—an automatic disqualifier that barred him from applying for seven years. Later, his agency pretended to be appalled when allegations of Freeman having substance abuse issues surfaced. Like every other red flag in his record, it was ignored when it became inconvenient.

Shortly before being hired, Freeman was **arrested for DUI**. He lied to the arresting deputy about where he worked, deliberately hiding the fact that he was employed at a prison at the time. That lie was obvious: his resume listed the prison job, while the police report showed a different employer. Any competent background investigator would have caught the contradiction immediately. Instead, it was overlooked or ignored. Freeman then refused the

breathalyzer and was difficult with the deputy, more red flags that should have disqualified him from a career in law enforcement on the spot.

It is clear that whoever conducted Freeman's pre-hire background check either **failed to do their job** or deliberately **looked the other way.** By approving someone with a DUI arrest, documented dishonesty to law enforcement, and a history of psychological and behavioral concerns including his enrollment in different forms of anger management since the 6th grade, the agency opened itself up to **negligent hiring liability.**

Freeman's misconduct escalated once he entered the academy. He allegedly participated in a **"stalker hoax"** involving his then-girlfriend, placing notes on her car while she filed false reports claiming she had a stalker. When the truth came out, she was fired and lost her AZ POST certification. Freeman, however, faced no consequences.

In 2018, Shawn Freeman claimed to be the victim of an officer-involved shooting. In reality, it was a **negligent discharge of his own firearm**. The evidence never supported his story—not the ballistics, not the timeline, and certainly not the version he told, which changed depending on who was listening. Freeman falsely accused a man of either pointing a gun at him or firing at him, take your pick, because he couldn't keep it straight. That man was walking free when Freeman allegedly retaliated against him months later by intentionally firing known defective "less-lethal" bean bag rounds at close range while the man's hands were in the air. The impact caused permanent injuries and disfigurement.

To make matters worse, the pretend officer involved shooting incident triggered a multi-agency response involving helicopters, K-9 units, and even the U.S. Marshals—resources that were diverted from actual emergencies to chase down a lie. The operation cost taxpayers a fortune. And like everything else tied to Freeman's misconduct, it was quietly swept under the rug.

The consequences of Freeman's behavior have cost the public dearly. The city that employs him appears to be self-insured for up to $10 million before outside insurance coverage applies. Each time Freeman's misconduct results in a lawsuit, the city quietly settles, diverting taxpayer money from public needs to cover for one officer's reckless actions.

His supervisors didn't just look the other way—they **actively buried the record.** They knew about his DUI arrest, his false statements to law enforcement, and his refusal to cooperate with the deputy. They knew about his admission to illegal prescription use. They knew he had been in different forms of anger management since sixth grade. They knew about his failed psychological evaluation, his violent outbursts, his dishonesty, domestic violence allegations

from multiple partners, and even the stalking hoax that cost his former girlfriend her career. And still, they kept him in uniform, on the street with a badge, a gun, and unchecked authority.

Taken together, these events paint a disturbing portrait of **violence, deception, recklessness, and manipulation**—traits that should have disqualified him from public service. Every red flag is ignored. Every incident is buried. Freeman is enabled and protected despite repeatedly demonstrating that he cannot be trusted with authority. Yet, Arizona continues to certify him as a peace officer.

Freeman isn't just protected—he is enabled. Every lawsuit, every settlement, every buried complaint proves it. He isn't a one-off problem officer. His entire career has been a case study in negligent hiring, systemic cover-ups, and taxpayer-funded damage control. And now armed with the state's authority and shielded by his department, Freeman has redirected his unchecked power against Erin Gerlach, the mother of his child with help from his colleagues.

This is the definition of **institutional complicity.** Freeman was handed a badge, a gun, and statewide authority despite a documented history of abuse, violence, instability, dishonesty, and retaliation. And when lawsuits pile up, the city pays them off. Taxpayers shouldered the burden while Freeman faces no consequences.

Layered onto Freeman's history of abuse is his conduct in the family courts: a documented pattern of perjury across three jurisdictions, filing false police reports, and the weaponization of judicial process to continue his control. He has lied to law enforcement, manipulated filings, and used the courtroom as a tool for retaliation.

Despite the mountain of contradictions in his record, Freeman's agency continues to shield him. Instead of investigating his misconduct, they've allowed him to funnel taxpayer dollars into the malicious prosecution of the mother of his child. While their community faces real crises such as missing and murdered children, the removal of school resource officers, and a shortage of protective services—they claim they don't have enough funding for.

But somehow, they have plenty of funding to stalk, harass, intimidate, and criminalize the ex of one of their own.

Judicial Misconduct and Systemic Abuse: The Troubling Legacy of Judge Charlene Jackson

Judge Charlene D. Jackson of the Maricopa County Superior Court, who presided over Freeman and Gerlach's custody case, has a well-documented history of judicial misconduct. Far from serving as a neutral arbiter, Jackson has repeatedly ignored Arizona Rules of Family Law Procedure, exhibited overt bias, failed to follow Arizona law when issuing orders, ignored mandates from the appellate courts, violated parents and children's constitutional rights, and weaponized the system to punish protective parents like Gerlach.

Drawing from extensive documented cases, including her filing of retaliatory restraining orders, manipulating court records, and dismissing critical evidence, it appears Jackson embedded retaliation into the family court process itself.

Her pattern of Jackson's dishonesty and misconduct is detailed comprehensively here. This history underscores how Jackson's actions go beyond isolated errors and beyond one case, they reflect systemic abuse of judicial power that has devastating consequences for families under her jurisdiction.

The Freeman-Jackson Blueprint for Retaliation

The most egregious chapter of Freeman's misconduct unfolded in family court—where his lies weren't just tolerated, they were ratified by Judge Charlene Jackson. She didn't merely fail to act. She institutionalized retaliation by rubber-stamping Freeman's perjury and fraud on the court into binding orders that stripped Gerlach of custody, endangered Brooklyn, and violated both of their constitutional rights. It's a blueprint for how abusers weaponize the court system, and how Arizona's judiciary enables it.

Jackson's courtroom became a pipeline for Freeman's vendetta. Her rulings reflected her bias and complicity. **She transformed a custody case into a campaign of state-sanctioned abuse and retaliation, defying the Arizona and U.S. Constitution by placing a child with her abuser and criminalizing a mother for doing what the system refused to: protect her child.**

To make matters worse, oversight agencies such as the commission on judicial conduct are dismissing complaints without proper investigations and are emboldening rogue judges like Jackson to operate outside of their legal and ethical bounds.

The Abuse Behind the Headline

Erin Gerlach and her daughter Brooklyn endured a sustained pattern of horrific abuse at the hands of Shawn Freeman as alleged in court filings and police reports. Below are a few of the allegations that speak to the true stakes behind this legal battle:

- Freeman physically assaulted Gerlach multiple times while she held Brooklyn; one assault caused Brooklyn's head to hit the corner of a wall.
- Freeman dragged Gerlach to the floor by her ponytail while she was holding Brooklyn, causing the child to fall onto a hard tile floor.
- Freeman frequently threw objects at both Gerlach and Brooklyn, leaving them with bruises, cuts, swelling, and other visible injuries.
- Freeman regularly berated Gerlach over a brain injury she sustained during childbirth. He called her degrading names such as "retarded," "useless," "worthless," "crazy cunt," and encouraged her to kill herself—all in front of Brooklyn. He then dared to accuse Gerlach of being "suicidal" to the family court.
- Freeman physically disciplined Brooklyn with such force that she was left with visible red marks on her body, despite wearing a diaper.
- Freeman used law enforcement tools and techniques including an old taser and hobble restraint to physically assault Gerlach. He also applied pressure point tactics learned in police training, particularly when intoxicated. Freeman alleged under oath that he used "de-escalation" tactics on Gerlach claiming that was the reason Gerlach had photos of injuries on her body.
- On more than one occasion, the violence was so severe that Gerlach believed she needed emergency medical care and slept in hospital parking lots with Brooklyn, afraid of Freeman getting into trouble and subsequent retaliation she would face if she went inside.
- Freeman dragged Gerlach down the stairs by her hair in front of Brooklyn causing her to be hysterical and hide under her bed away from her father.
- In a rage, Freeman threw a hot plate of food at Gerlach and Brooklyn. Brooklyn was shirtless and sustained scratches and red marks on her face and body from the hot food. Freeman later admitted on video the attack was because they were "annoying."
- In one particularly disturbing incident, Freeman dragged Gerlach across the floor by her hair to "clean up" washable finger paint, treating her like a human mop, while Brooklyn watched, visibly hysterical and traumatized.
- He routinely destroyed Gerlach's and Brooklyn's personal belongings while yelling profanities. He would then force Gerlach to clean up the damage he caused.
- While Gerlach was pregnant with their second child, Freeman physically assaulted her by kicking, hitting, stepping on, and attempting to suffocate her.

- During Gerlach's second pregnancy, Freeman, weighing more than double Gerlach, held her down and forcibly shoved abortion pills down her throat. Days later when their unborn child was still inside Gerlach, he forcefully inserted swabs into her body, resulting in the death of their unborn child at around 20 weeks. Gerlach was hospitalized in the ICU with life-threatening complications, including severe blood loss, sepsis, DIC, and multi-organ dysfunction. She had to give birth to her dead baby who Freeman relentlessly tried to send to medical waste. Gerlach can no longer have children after this incident.
- Approximately 2 days before Gerlach was hospitalized, she was bleeding heavily and very ill. Freeman borrowed a SWAT members vehicle to conduct his own surveillance operation on the Gila River Reservation. When Freeman arrived home, he made Gerlach help him clean blood, long dark hairs and what resembled tissue off the car including scrubbing the bumper and windshield of the vehicle. Freeman claimed he was driving blacked out and hit a “rez dog.” Gerlach was too sick to question it but later she realized those long hairs did not belong to a dog. Upon information and belief, Freeman committed a hit and run and killed a woman named Natasha Cooper.
- Freeman held Brooklyn’s face under running water and, in a separate incident, attempted to smother her with a pillow to stop her from crying. Gerlach intervened both times, locking herself and Brooklyn in another room for safety.
- He placed GPS tracking devices on Gerlach’s vehicles without her consent.
- On several occasions, he confiscated Gerlach’s phone to prevent her from calling 911.
- Freeman physically and sexually abused Brooklyn on multiple occasions. Due to the child’s age and the sensitive nature of the allegations, further details are being withheld publicly to protect her privacy.

The Freeman Formula: Confess, Contradict, Control

Shawn Freeman’s custody strategy wasn’t just brazen, it was legally perverse. Under penalty of perjury in Arizona, Freeman admitted that his daughter, Brooklyn, had witnessed his acts of domestic violence against Erin Gerlach. By law, that admission should have triggered immediate protective intervention for both mother and child. Instead, Freeman flipped the script. He argued that Gerlach was unfit precisely because she “allowed” Brooklyn to witness the violence that he himself committed. This was a deliberate inversion of accountability: **the abuser recast himself as the victim, using his own abuse as a justification to strip the protective parent of custody.**

Freeman went even further. In his initial filings, he predicted that Gerlach would accuse him of abuse and claimed any injuries she reported were a result of his law enforcement de-escalation training. He described physically restraining or moving Gerlach during verbal arguments as tactical interventions. He admitted escalating verbal disputes into physical

confrontations but blamed his law enforcement training for these actions. These admissions were deeply troubling, but also strategic. Freeman used his position and training to frame violence as procedure and retaliation as legal authority and the court accepted this framing.

Consider this: the man who perpetrated the abuse turned that abuse into a legal argument to strip away a victim's parental rights and was rewarded for it.

Freeman's contradictory statements span multiple jurisdictions. For example, while admitting to domestic violence in Arizona, he flatly denied it under oath in California courts. Both versions cannot be true; therefore, his contradictions amount to perjury.

This pattern of denial and admission wasn't accidental—it was strategically calculated. Freeman's inconsistent narratives exposed his manipulations, yet the courts allowed them to stand. Judge Charlene Jackson ignored the blatant contradiction between Freeman's statements and effectively victim blamed Gerlach for her own injuries inflicted by her abuser. Jackson ignored the fact that a child witnessing domestic violence is harm caused by the abuser—not the protective parent. Instead, she blamed Gerlach.

Freeman told the court that Gerlach failed to protect their daughter from his domestic violence. But when Gerlach did exactly that by removing Brooklyn from the abusive environment and getting her to safety, Freeman flipped the narrative. He reframed her protective actions as obstruction, then escalated his claims to accuse her of withholding the child, and ultimately, of abduction.

It was a textbook case of retaliatory reframing: Gerlach was punished for not leaving, then punished for leaving. Punished for staying in the abuse, then punished for protecting her child from it.

Freeman's shifting allegations were manipulative and strategic. And the court rewarded them.

Jackson went further. She actively dissuaded Gerlach from cooperating with law enforcement investigations into Freeman's domestic violence and child abuse, calling it "harassment" and a threat to Freeman's employment. That's not judicial discretion, that's obstruction.

Freeman's contradictions weren't isolated. In a motion filed by Gerlach, she described a "**pattern of deliberate and recurring perjury**" spanning multiple jurisdictions and statements to law enforcement. Freeman filed false police reports, manipulated investigators, and tailored his testimony to fit whatever courtroom he was in. His agency only reinforced the pattern, denying domestic violence altogether—even though Freeman himself had admitted to it under

oath. So either the department covered for him, or he committed perjury. Either way, the system failed. Spectacularly.

Currently, he is lying to the prosecutor in Gerlach's criminal custodial interference case who is refusing to charge Freeman with any of the crimes he allegedly committed during litigation while identifying as a police officer.

The Setup: Threats, Fear, and a Pattern of Abuse

In September 2022, Gerlach filed her first restraining order against Freeman in California at the courthouse closest to her home. In it, she told the court she feared he would try to have her falsely arrested because he had threatened her with it throughout their relationship. It was one of the reasons she kept returning, to the abusive relationship. Freeman eventually followed through with his promise. He weaponized the legal system to criminally prosecute her, just as she predicted in her restraining order.

Omission and Fabrication of Evidence

Freeman didn't just lie, he curated the record. He selectively submitted documents that supported his narrative while omitting filings, declarations, and minute orders that contradicted it. One minute order admonished Freeman's California attorney for Freeman evading service for nearly six months from the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department and his attorney refusing service in open court. Freeman intentionally omitted that page from his submission to another court to conceal his misconduct. That's perjury by omission.

Manipulation and Entrapment: How Freeman Engineered Harassment Claims While Actively Engaging His Victim

Shawn Freeman's manipulation wasn't confined to the courtroom—it extended into every corner of his interactions with Erin Gerlach. While accusing her of harassment, Freeman was actively texting her, sending photos from his trip to Colorado, photos of him paddleboarding, casual messages and photos from work, and engaging her in conversation. In reality, he wasn't being harassed; he was orchestrating an entrapment. He kept communication flowing with her while secretly telling police and anyone who would listen that he was a victim of harassment. It was calculated entrapment.

On August 31, 2022, Freeman filed a police report and obtained an order of protection against Gerlach, accusing her of posting videos online that showed his badge number. He told officers this constitutionally protected act amounted to identity theft, a claim that was legally absurd and factually dishonest.

The deception escalated. On September 8, Freeman told Gilbert Police Officer Henslee that he had contacted Riverside County to serve Gerlach with the protection order, implying she was evading service. That was a lie. Records confirmed that contact never happened and Riverside County never received the order until February 2023—five months later.

Why the delay? Because Freeman intentionally withheld service until after the temporary orders hearing in Maricopa County. His goal was simple: prevent Gerlach from having an opportunity to contest the order of protection before the judge ruled on custody. While telling police he was actively trying to serve her and that she was bombarding him with unwanted contact, Freeman was still in communication with her and deliberately waited to have her served, manufacturing a narrative to gain an unfair advantage in a child custody case. He weaponized the legal system, turning due process into a rigged game where only he knew the rules.

This wasn't a misunderstanding. It was a strategic abuse of process. Freeman engineered the timeline, manipulated law enforcement, filed false statements in court, made false statements to law enforcement, and exploited the court's vulnerabilities to secure favorable rulings through deception. And the system let him do it.

A Pattern of Lies and Manipulation

The story began quietly in the fall of 2022, but by early 2023, Shawn Freeman's ongoing pattern of courtroom deceit was impossible to ignore. This wasn't just a custody battle—it was a carefully orchestrated cross-state scheme. Freeman twisted the law to work against Erin Gerlach and repeatedly lied under oath whenever the truth didn't suit him.

The Setup: Threats, Fear, and a Pattern of Abuse

In September 2022, Erin Gerlach filed her first restraining order against Freeman in California, near her home. She told the court she feared he would try to have her falsely arrested

because he had threatened her with that throughout their relationship. This fear was one of the reasons she kept returning to the abusive relationship. Freeman didn't just threaten her with arrest—he eventually followed through. He weaponized the legal system to criminally prosecute her, just as he had promised.

August–September 2022: The Custody Battle Begins

In late August 2022, Freeman filed for an Order of Protection against Gerlach, swearing under oath that she lived in California and listing her correct address. He made similar statements to Gilbert Police, again listing her correct California address. But just days later on September 7 he filed a Petition to Establish Paternity in Maricopa County claiming her address was "unknown" and listing his own home as her "last known." Within one week, Freeman had told law enforcement he knew exactly where Gerlach lived, then told the court he didn't. This was no clerical error, it was calculated perjury.

Fall 2022: Contradictions Pile Up

As the custody battle intensified, Freeman's lies grew bolder. In October, he filed a Motion for Alternate Service in Arizona, once again listing Gerlach's correct California address. Yet by December, he swore under oath that her whereabouts were unknown—even as his own attorneys were directly corresponding with Gerlach at that same address. Though his filings contradicted one another, the courts accepted his version each time, despite the illogical inconsistencies.

Contradictory Claims About Gerlach's Mental Health and Freeman's Duty as Mandated Reporter

Freeman claimed that Erin Gerlach was mentally unstable, "crazy," and had been suicidal for over five years. Yet if he truly believed she was a danger to their daughter, why did he leave the child alone with her every single day since birth? Not only did he allow Gerlach to take the child out of state for days, weeks, and even months at a time without him, but Freeman also frequently traveled without them both.

As a police officer in Arizona, Freeman is a mandated reporter under state law, which means he is legally required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child immediately to law

enforcement or the Arizona Department of Child Safety. If Freeman genuinely believed Gerlach's mental health posed a risk, he had a legal duty to report it.

So by leaving their child alone with Gerlach daily for years without reporting any concerns, Freeman is admitting he disregarded a serious danger and knowingly endangered his own child. The law makes clear that failure to report suspected abuse is a crime. Therefore, Freeman's actions, or inactions, raise critical questions about whether he endangered the child and violated his legal obligations as a mandated reporter. Either way, he admitted to violating the law while identifying himself under oath as a police officer. He can't have it both ways.

Omission and Fabrication of Evidence

Freeman didn't just lie—he curated the record. He selectively submitted documents supporting his narrative while omitting filings, declarations, and minute orders that contradicted it. For example, one minute order admonished Freeman's California attorney for refusing to accept service of a domestic violence restraining order on Freeman's behalf, who was dodging and lying to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Department for approximately 6 months to evade service. Freeman intentionally left out this page in his court filings while making the minute order appear complete to conceal his own misconduct.

February 2023: Two Courts, Two Stories

By early 2023, Freeman was juggling cases in multiple jurisdictions and his lies became harder to maintain. On February 10, in Riverside County, California, he filed sworn affidavits denying specific domestic violence incidents. These denials were false, contradicted by police reports, photos, videos, flight records, and a District Attorney's charging worksheet. The only reason criminal charges for Domestic Battery weren't filed was that the 1-year statute of limitations had expired. In that same filing, Freeman requested equal 50–50 custody with Gerlach.

Less than a week later in Arizona, he painted a very different picture. Freeman filed an ex-parte emergency petition claiming Gerlach was a danger to their daughter and requested a warrant for the child with permission to enter private property—which Jackson granted. These sworn statements directly conflicted with each other, both could not be true. If Gerlach were truly dangerous, Freeman would not have requested joint custody days before. He and his

attorney failed to disclose the California filings in Arizona, a deliberate act to mislead the court, deprive Gerlach of her right to due process and to defend herself, and secure emergency orders under false pretenses. Under Arizona law, such conduct should result in disbarment.

April 2023: Escalation in Los Angeles

Two months later, Freeman doubled down in Los Angeles. He submitted affidavits falsely claiming he hadn't known his daughter's whereabouts since August 2022 and once again denied well-documented abuse. Despite overwhelming evidence, Freeman persisted in lying under oath. Freeman, under penalty of perjury, alleged Gerlach's initial Domestic Violence Restraining Order (DVRO) was retaliatory and filed after she was served court papers for the Maricopa County domestic relations case. Records show she filed it on September 13, 2022—weeks before being served.

Freeman intentionally altered critical dates in Los Angeles filings to fit his fabricated narrative that Gerlach's filings were retaliatory, an intentional effort to deceive the court. He also falsely stated her prior DVROs were all dismissed with prejudice while seeking dismissal of her current DVRO without an evidentiary hearing. Again, doing everything he can to manipulate the court into violating Gerlach's rights to due process.

When that failed, on the morning of the court date where Gerlach was prepared to testify as a victim, witness and party to the case, Freeman threatened to have her arrested if she appeared. Terrified, Gerlach did not attend the hearing and the case was dismissed **without prejudice**. His intimidation silenced her as a victim and witness, an act considered felony dissuasion under California law.

Late 2023: Fabricated Kidnapping Reports

By late 2023, Freeman escalated tactics, filing police reports accusing Gerlach of kidnapping their daughter on August 4, 2022. Yet, at that time, he told Gilbert police she and the child had moved to California and that he planned to visit. He never reported a kidnapping during the original nearly seven-month investigation window. These later fabricated reports were meant to harass, intimidate, and criminalize Gerlach. Freeman and his agency have an interest in discrediting Gerlach to prevent her from being a credible witness in pending civil litigation against Freeman.

Shifting Stories Everywhere

Freeman's narrative changed depending on his audience. To Gilbert Police, he said Gerlach had moved to California with their daughter and he planned to visit them there. But to Maricopa Family Court, he alleged Gerlach "erratically" withdrew their daughter from preschool and fled to California. In the very same filing, he contradicted himself, claiming the California trip was temporary in nature and taken with his permission. Both stories cannot be true: if the child was in California with her mother, she could not also be enrolled in preschool in Arizona. Freeman's false claim that Gerlach withdrew their daughter erratically was a calculated move to manipulate custody, deceive the court, and undermine Gerlach's credibility. And it worked.

He pushed the contradictions further by telling the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children that the child had been abducted on August 4, 2022. While spinning these conflicting stories, Freeman was vacationing in Hawaii, Mexico, Colorado, California, and Idaho, attending bachelor parties, deep-sea fishing, designing and building a new home, and getting engaged—not exactly the actions of a desperate father. During the seven months with no custody order, he provided nothing for the child, not even birthday or Christmas cards.

A Judicial Failure to Protect

Arizona law prohibits punishing a parent for taking a child out of state to escape abuse, especially when accompanied by a protective order from another jurisdiction. Gerlach had obtained such a restraining order in California before Freeman filed his Arizona custody petition. Judge Jackson disregarded this order entirely.
In a brief UCCJEA hearing, Jackson directed a California judge to strip the child from the protection order. The hearing was a sham: parties were told to stay muted, given no chance to speak or submit evidence, and Jackson hadn't even reviewed the restraining order or its basis. Yet she intervened to remove legally mandated protection for the child. The entire hearing was a gross violation of due process as the law states a judge "shall" made findings on the record which Jackson did not do. At a later hearing Jackson muted the For The Record "FTR" system and stated she intentionally placed the ruling on jurisdiction in a non-appealable minute order. She did not make any findings nor did she allow wither party to participate or present evidence.

Jackson ignored domestic violence evidence, tampered with court records, disregarded due process, muted court recording systems to conceal inappropriate statements, and admitted to destroying evidence.

While Freeman's perjury set the stage, Jackson's ruling gave it legal force—granting Freeman sole legal decision-making and stripping Brooklyn from meaningful contact with her mother who was her sole daily caretaker since birth, based entirely on Freeman's false claim that Gerlach took their child out-of-state without his permission.

Freeman knew exactly where Gerlach lived, repeatedly providing her California address to police and courts, and texting with her while she lived there. Conveniently he knew her address when he repeatedly filed false police reports against her. Yet in court, he claimed her address was "unknown" and painted her as unstable and mentally ill. Jackson accepted his version without question, ignoring contradictions and evidence to the contrary.

Less than three days after issuing temporary orders, Jackson granted Freeman's ex-parte petition requesting contempt findings, enforcement, sanctions, and a warrant for the child with permission to enter private property despite admitting Gerlach had not been served and their intent to "surprise" her.

By signing a warrant allowing seizure of the child and entry to private property without notice or a hearing, Jackson stripped Gerlach of her constitutional rights. This was blatant judicial misconduct and ambush litigation ratified by a sitting judge.

The Consequences of His Lies

The most harmful lie concerned Gerlach's location. Freeman repeatedly told the court he did not know where she was, despite filing paperwork listing her California address, texting with her regularly, and telling police she and the child had moved. Freeman sure knew where Gerlach was every time he filed another false police report. Judge Charlene Jackson's custody decision—giving sole legal authority to Freeman and stripping Gerlach of meaningful contact with her daughter, and placing a child with their abuser, depended entirely on Freeman's false claim that Gerlach had taken their daughter out of state without his permission.

Freeman didn't just lie; he perpetrated a fraud on the court. It was calculated perjury and an abuse of process that he committed while identifying himself to the court as a police officer.

Judge Jackson's Retaliatory Restraining Order

In March 2025, Jackson went further than any judge should. She filed a civil restraining order against Gerlach, citing harassment based on complaints, public records requests, and

Gerlach's public criticism of her conduct. These are activities squarely protected by the First Amendment.

That move alone should've triggered a judicial ethics investigation. Instead, Jackson remains on the bench, issuing orders that defy logic, violate due process, and endanger children. **The Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct? Silent.**

But it gets worse.

In her sworn application, **Jackson admitted to meeting with investigators from Freeman's own law enforcement department—an agency that has no jurisdiction over Jackson's residence, Gerlach's residence, and according to Judge Ronda Fisk, does not have jurisdiction over the courthouse. Jackson participated in this meeting while presiding over their custody case.** She also acknowledged obtaining the home address of a critic who had written about her online, information that could only have come through law enforcement databases or the improper use of a warrant. Her own statements suggest the possibility of improper access to private data, with speculation pointing to potential involvement from her husband, who reportedly serves as a liaison at a regional fusion center, an intelligence role that may afford access to sensitive personal information which raises serious concerns of possible **abuse of state resources to target critics.**

This was not a judicial act. It was retaliation. And by filing the order outside her role as a judge, Jackson stripped herself of judicial immunity.

Jackson's Restraining Order Backfired—And Became Evidence of Her Own Misconduct

Erin Gerlach isn't backing down and neither is the truth. Despite Judge Charlene Jackson's retaliatory tactics, Gerlach stands firm alongside a growing coalition of families who have come forward with documented accounts of harm, judicial abuse, and retaliation linked to Jackson and Arizona's deeply compromised family court system.

Jackson's attempt to silence Gerlach through a restraining order has done the opposite: it amplified public scrutiny and exposed the very misconduct Gerlach has worked tirelessly to reveal.

What Jackson labeled "harassment" is, in fact, lawful advocacy, protected by the Constitution, supported by public records, and grounded in personal experience.

Gerlach's actions reflect a civic duty to speak out against institutional abuse and her duty as a mother to protect all children, including her own. If Judge Jackson had honored her oath, respected the law, and refrained from violating the constitutional rights of parents and children, there would be no misconduct to report and no public campaign demanding accountability.

The evidence is overwhelming. Court records, sworn affidavits, and Jackson's own contradictory filings paint a disturbing portrait of judicial misconduct, abuse of authority, and retaliatory behavior unbecoming of any public official, let alone a sitting Superior Court judge. Most alarming is Jackson's willingness to admit under oath to conduct that directly violates judicial ethics, all in a desperate attempt to intimidate Gerlach into silence. Her restraining order wasn't just legally baseless—it was a confession. A public record of her own misconduct, weaponized to suppress criticism.

Meanwhile, Gerlach remains the one in danger. She is terrified of Jackson's escalating abuse of power and in urgent need of protection. The growing chorus of voices challenging Jackson's behavior is not coincidental. It is a collective response to a documented pattern of bias, retaliation, and institutional betrayal. From falsified records and privacy violations to placing children in danger and weaponizing her judicial authority, Jackson's actions are not just unethical, they are potentially criminal.

These are not isolated missteps. They are part of a broader crisis that demands immediate accountability. If Judge Jackson knowingly submitted false statements, illegally accessed private data, or leveraged her title to retaliate against critics, she must be investigated, removed from the bench, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. The integrity of our courts and the safety of those who seek justice within them depends on it.

A **Change.org petition** demanding her removal has garnered over 2,400 signatures, citing a pattern of decisions that endanger children and violate due process.

The Fallout: Criminalizing Protection

Gerlach was charged with felony custodial interference. Because in Arizona, protecting your child from a confessed abuser is apparently a crime. The charges, her supporters argue, are retaliatory—designed to punish her for exposing misconduct and serve as a warning to other protective parents to keep their mouths shut.
This case is part of a broader pattern of retaliation against protective parents who expose systemic failures. "This isn't a custody dispute, it's institutional child endangerment disguised

as justice," said Gerlach.

The timing is unmistakable. Gerlach began publishing accounts of her experience, submitting evidence to oversight bodies, and joining grassroots campaigns calling for judicial reform. In response, Freeman and Jackson closed ranks. The same officer whose contradictions fueled the case, and the same judge who relied on those contradictions to issue unlawful retaliatory court orders, are now central figures in her prosecution.

Rather than investigating Freeman's perjury or Jackson's violations of judicial ethics, the system turned its power against the person who exposed them. Gerlach's so-called offense? keeping her daughter safe from a man she had already documented as abusive was recast as a crime. The message is chilling: a protective parent who dares to criticize officials can expect not just to lose her child, but to face criminal prosecution.

This is why advocates frame Gerlach's case as a constitutional crisis. Her criminal charge does not just threaten her freedom; it undermines the First Amendment itself. Speaking out about misconduct in family court is protected speech. Filing complaints about a judge and a police officer is a protected civic act.

Had the court followed the law, none of this would be happening. If Judge Charlene Jackson wasn't biased, had upheld basic constitutional protections starting with due process, and refused to act on filings riddled with contradictions and demonstrable falsehoods, this case would have taken an entirely different course. If Shawn Freeman had been held accountable for perjury, for filing knowingly false police reports, and for abusing court procedures, his custody claims would have collapsed under the weight of their own deceit.

Instead, misconduct was legitimized. Lies were elevated into judicial orders. And the result is what Erin Gerlach faces today: the complete loss of her child, criminal prosecution, and public vilification for protecting her daughter and daring to expose the corruption embedded in her case.

Most devastating of all, a child has now been placed in the custody of her abuser. She has been stripped of protection and forcibly separated from the only parent who consistently safeguarded her, nurtured her, and cared for her daily needs since birth. What began as a mother's effort to shield her daughter from violence has ended with the state enforcing that violence through court order.

In Arizona's family courts, truth is punishable. That's the brutal reality exposed by the selective and retaliatory prosecution of Gerlach. And that's why calls for federal intervention, judicial

oversight, and legislative reform are growing louder by the day.

Judicial Retaliation and Police Perjury: The State-Sanctioned Targeting of a Protective Mother

Despite overwhelming documentation of misconduct, Freeman remains a certified peace officer. Judge Charlene Jackson, who presided over the custody case, remains on the bench. And Gerlach—who has spent years trying to protect her child and expose the truth is now facing criminal charges for defying court orders that were never lawfully issued in the first place. And Brooklyn is living with her abuser without the only caretaker she has known since birth.

Both Freeman and Jackson remain directly involved in Gerlach's criminal custodial interference case. The same officer who lied under oath, lied to police and is now lying to prosecutors and the same judge who relied on those lies and committed egregious judicial misconduct and retaliation are now spitefully and maliciously participating in the prosecution of the woman they targeted. This is not just unethical. It is collusion. And it is being done with the full backing of Maricopa County. The fact that the County Attorney's Office is allowing this to proceed appears to be blatant prosecutorial misconduct.

Federal Complaints Filed: Victims Demand DOJ Investigation Into Judge Jackson and Freeman

Erin Gerlach, along with a group of other victims who have endured similar treatment in Judge Charlene Jackson's courtroom, has formally petitioned the U.S. Department of Justice to launch a federal investigation into Judge Jackson, SWAT Officer Shawn Freeman, and the broader Maricopa County family court system. Their complaint outlines a disturbing pattern of civil rights violations, abuse of authority, and unchecked judicial misconduct that spans years and multiple cases.

The urgency of their request intensified after **Judge Jackson filed a retaliatory restraining order against Gerlach**—an order widely viewed as an attempt to intimidate her into silence. In court filings **Jackson admitted to participating in criminal investigations while simultaneously presiding over Gerlach's case**, a blatant conflict of interest that undermines judicial neutrality.

Even more alarming, Jackson acknowledged obtaining the home address of an online critic who was exercising their First Amendment rights, despite having no legal basis to do so. She also admitted to acquiring Gerlach's home address, even though Gerlach had consistently filed under a P.O. Box for safety reasons. These admissions have raised serious concerns about Jackson's access to law enforcement databases and her willingness to use those connections to target litigants in her courtroom. The misconduct committed by whomever is obtaining this information on Jackson's behalf is also going unchecked.

The pattern is clear: Jackson is not just presiding over cases, she's inserting herself into them. Victims and advocates warn that her conduct reflects a dangerous fusion of judicial power and law enforcement access, weaponized against those who challenge her rulings or expose misconduct.

The petition to the DOJ demands immediate federal investigation and oversight, citing violations of due process, judicial ethics, and constitutional protections including the violations of children's constitutional rights. For Gerlach and others, this isn't just about one judge, it's about dismantling a system that punishes truth, protects abusers, and places children in harm's way while silencing dissent.

The disturbing pattern of coordinated misconduct, obstruction, and abuse by Shawn Freeman and Judge Charlene Jackson raises grave concerns under federal law, including the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) and statutes prohibiting deprivation of rights under color of law. Their conduct—encompassing perjury, falsification and suppression of evidence, deprivation of constitutional due process rights, retaliation against lawful advocacy, and misuse of official positions reflects actions taken as part of a criminal enterprise systematically engaging in racketeering activity prosecutable under RICO. Moreover, by abusing their authority as a law enforcement officer and judge, they have willfully deprived Erin Gerlach and her daughter Brooklyn of their constitutional protections guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, including due process, equal protection, and free speech rights. These violations, falling under 18 U.S.C. § 242, illustrate how public officials can weaponize their positions to silence victims, shield abusers, and corrupt the administration of justice. The cumulative and ongoing nature of these violations calls for immediate, comprehensive federal investigation and prosecution to uphold the rule of law, restore justice, and deter such systemic abuses of power.

The Cost to Arizona

For Arizona taxpayers, the price tag is staggering. Multiple courts, law enforcement agencies, and judicial staff have been consumed by Freeman's personal vendetta against his ex. The total cost of the Gerlach case alone has already likely exceeded a million dollars. All of it publicly funded. All of it draining critical resources from communities that actually need protection. The state is subsidizing a campaign of abuse to fulfill Freeman's personal vendetta, and the public is paying for it.

Legislative Response and Public Outcry

The Arizona Senate's Ad Hoc Committee on Family Court Orders, co-chaired by Senator Mark Finchem and Representative Rachel Keshel, has begun investigating these systemic failures. But advocates warn that hearings alone are not enough. "We need legislation that mandates independent oversight," Gerlach wrote. "If the Arizona Commission on Judicial Conduct won't do its job, we must defund it."

A Call for Accountability

This case isn't an outlier. Arizona's family court system has been accused of systemic misconduct for years. Judges who retaliate against protective parents. Police departments that protect their own. Badges and gavels are used to silence victims and protect abusers. Perjury is rewarded, truth is punished, and children are placed in harms way by court order. Prosecutors who criminalize survivors. And oversight bodies that do absolutely nothing.

As Gerlach's case unfolds, the stakes couldn't be higher. The systemic failures, police misconduct, judicial misconduct, prosecutorial misconduct, and courthouse collusion are all being exposed in the public eye and the public's cries for accountability, reform and justice are only growing louder.